

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 04860 01 OF 02 120836Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AS-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-07 /076 W

-----016942 120841Z /10

R 120709Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 849

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PERTH

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CANBERRA 4860

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 1162: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AS

SUBJ: ALP LEADERSHIP AFTER THE PERTH CONFERENCE

1. SUMMARY: THE ALP CONFERENCE IN PERTH JULY 4-8, 1977, CONSOLIDATED GOUGH WHITLAM'S POSITION AS PARTY LEADER AND CANDIDATE IN THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTIONS, CONFIRMED BILL HAYDEN'S POSITION AS HEIR APPARENT, ENHANCED MICK YOUNG'S REPUTATION SUBSTANTIALLY, WEAKENED ROBERT HAWKE'S POSITION
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PAGE 02 CANBER 04860 01 OF 02 120836Z

IN THE PARTY IF NOT IN THE COUNTRY AT LARGE, AND GENERALLY WEAKENED THE LEFT-WING OF THE ALP. END SUMMARY.

2. ROBERT HAWKE, PRSIDENT OF THE ALP AND PRESIDENT OF THE ACTU, HAD A BAD WEEK IN PERTH. BEFORE THE CONFERENCE BEGAN, IT WAS CLEAR THAT MICK YOUNG, FEDERAL MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA AD PREVIOUS GENERAL

SECRETARY OF THE ALP, HAD THE NUMBERS TO DEFEAT HAWKE AS PRESIDENT OF THE ALP. HOWEVER, TO AVOID CONFLICT, AND TO AVOID EMBARRASSING HAWKE, YOUNG AGREED TO STAND ASIDE AND ALLOW HAWKE TO REMAIN PRESIDENT OF THE PARTY FOR ONE MORE YEAR. (MOREOVER, HIS DECISION WILL ALLOW YOUNG TO DEVOTE FULL TIME TO HIS OWN REELECTION CAMPAIGN NEXT YEAR.) FOLLOWING THIS NEAR DEFEAT, HAWKE GAVE A LATE-NIGHT, HIGHLY BIBULOUS RADIO INTERVIEW, WHERE HE MADE SOME STATEMENTS EMBARRASSING TO HIMSELF AND TO THE PARTY. HE FOLLOWED UP THE NEXT DAY WITH A PRESS CONFERENCE THAT EVEN SHOCKED THE JADED AUSTRALIAN PRESS CORPS. (AMONG OTHER THINGS, HAWKE SAID THAT THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY WAS "S...HOUSE") HAWKE ALSO HURT HIS CHANCES OF ENTERING FEDERAL PARLIAMENT BY STATING PUBLICLY FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT HE DID NOT INTEND TO GIVE UP HIS IMPORTANT PARTY AND UNION POSITIONS TO "PUT HIS BUM ON THE BACK BENCHES." HE WOULD ACCEPT A PARLIAMENTARY SEAT ONLY IF HE WERE GUARANTEED PARTY LEADERSHIP, AN EXPRESSION OF ARROGANCE WHICH OFFENDED MANY ALP PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS. HAWKE LATER TOLD JOHN DUCKER, HEAD OF THE ALP IN NEW SOUTH WALES, THAT HE HAD NOW GIVEN UP HIS PARLIAMENTARY AMBITIONS. THIS MAY OR MAY NOT BE TRUE, BECAUSE OPINION POLLS CONTINUE TO SHOW HAWKE TO BE THE MOST POPULAR PUBLIC FIGURE IN THE COUNTRY.

3. MICK YOUNG, DEALING FROM A NEW POSITION OF STRENGTH, HELPED HIMSELF MOST AT THE CONFERENCE. DOMINANT AND CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 CANBER 04860 01 OF 02 120836Z

PERSUASIVE, HE MADE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ALP'S POLICY PLATFORMS ON ECONOMIC MATTERS AND FOREIGN TRADE, HEALTH AND WELFARE, AND MINERALS AND ENERGY (INCLUDING THE IMPORTANT URANIUM MINING ISSUE). HIS ARGUMENTS CLEARLY MOVED HIM TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE PARTY. HE WAS WELL PREPARED, WHICH HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN THE CASE, AND WAS CLEARLY POPULAR WITH ALL BRANCHES OF THE PARTY. HIS POSITION VIS-A-VIS HIS PRIMARY RIVAL FOR DEPUTY LEADER OF THE PARTY, PAUL KEATING, WAS GREATLY ENHANCED. HE ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS A POSSIBLE EVENTUAL LEADER OF THE ALP.

4. BILL HAYDEN, SHADOW DEFENSE MINISTER AND ALP MEMBER FROM QUEENSLAND, FOLLOWED HIS USUAL CONSTRUCTIVE, INTELLIGENT AND REASONED APPROACH. HE WELCOMED GOUGH WHITLAM'S RETURN TO THE ECONOMIC MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, AND WORKED HARD IN AND OUTSIDE THE CONFERENCE. HE HAS CLEARLY GAINED GENERAL ACCEPTANCE AS THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY LEADER OF THE ALP SHOULD GOUGH WHITLAM LOSE THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTIONS.

5. GOUGH WHITLAM, WHOM WE WERE INFORMED MADE A

DELIBERATE DECISION TO AVOID A DOMINANT ROLE IN THE CONFERENCE, WAS UNUSUALLY QUIET. HE EXPECTS TO LEAD THE ALP INTO THE NEXT ELECTIONS, AND IS CONFIDENT OF HIS POSITION. BUOYED BY THE LATEST PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, WHICH SHOW THAT HE IS LESS UNPOPULAR THAN MALCOLM FRASER (WHITLAM'S POPULARITY IS AT 29 PERCENT, FRASER'S AT 26 PERCENT; FRASER'S UNPOPULARITY IS AT 44 PERCENT, WHITLAM'S AT 41 PERCENT) HE BELIEVES THAT HE CAN BRING OFF AN ALP VICTORY IN 1978. WE WERE UNABLE TO FIND ANY OTHER CONFERENCE DELEGATES WHO SHARED THIS VIEW. WHITLAM WAS VERY HELPFUL TO US ON THE OMEGA ISSUE WHICH CARRIED BY ONLY 22-21 (SEE CANBERRA 4792).

6. JOHN DUCKER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF THE ALP AND
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PAGE 04 CANBER 04860 01 OF 02 120836Z

UNDISPUTED LEADER OF THE ALP IN N.S.W. (IT WAS DUCKER WHO PICKED NEVILLE WRAN OUT OF THE N.S.W. UPPER HOUSE, PUT HIM IN THE LOWER HOUSE AND MADE HIM PREMIER) WAS CLEARLY THE DOMINANT BEHIND-THE-SCENES FIGURE AT THE CONFERENCE AS HE IS IN THE ALP GENERALLY. A YORKSHIREMAN WITH NO AMBITIONS ON THE ELECTORAL SCENE, DUCKER SAVED HAWKE'S POSITION AS ALP PRESIDENT, LINED UP CENTER AND

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PAGE 01 CANBER 04860 02 OF 02 120837Z
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R 120632Z JUL 77
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AMCONSUL PERTH
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CANBERRA 4860

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

CENTER-RIGHT VOTES ON IMPORTANT ISSUES, AND WAS SUCCESSFUL
IN MAINTAINING A RELATIVELY OPEN ALP POSITION ON URANIUM
MINING. (DUCKER ACCOMPLISHED THIS THROUGH PAUL KEATING,
HIS PROTEGE. SEE SEPTTEL.)

7. IN GENERAL, THE LEFT-WING OF THE ALP DID NOT FARE
WELL AT THE CONFERENCE. BILL HARTLEY (ITS MOST VOCAL
MEMBER AND REPUTED RECIPIENT OF FUNDS FUNNELLED INTO
LEFT-WING CAUSES BY IRAQ) INFURIATED THE CONFERENCE AND
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PAGE 02 CANBER 04860 02 OF 02 120837Z

WAS CENSORED BY IT FOR HIS UNSUBSTANTIATED CHARGES THAT
THE POLCOUNS WAS A CIA AGENT, HIS UNREASONED ATTACKS ON
OMEGA AND URANIUM MINING, AND HIS GENERALLY OBSTRUCTIONIST
TACTICS. HE WAS CLEARLY THE VILLAIN OF THE CONFERENCE.
DEPUTY PARTY LEADER TOM UREN THROUGH HIS INTERVENTIONS
SOLIDIFIED HIS REPUTATION AS AN IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL
LIGHTWEIGHT APOLOGIST FOR THE LEFT. WHEN MICK YOUNG AND
PAUL KEATING WORK OUT THEIR DIFFERENCES, IT SHOULD BE
A RELATIVELY SIMPLE MATTER TO REPLACE UREN AS DEPUTY
LEADER OF THE ALP.
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